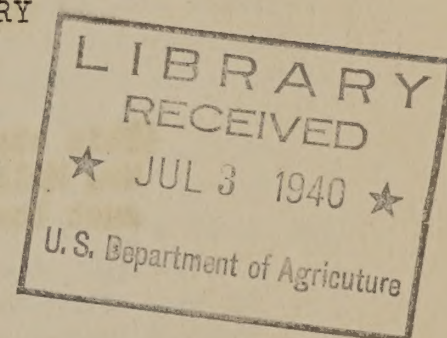


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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Sugar Division
Agricultural Adjustment Administration

AGRICULTURAL LABOR IN THE SUGAR INDUSTRY

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(This statement does not cover the cross-examination of Mr. Mulliken by members of the Senate committee since such testimony has not yet been published.)

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INTRODUCTION

It is not generally known that there are 325,000 agricultural workers in the sugar industry of the United States for whom the Federal Government establishes minimum wages. These wages are established under the provisions of the Sugar Act of 1937 which represents one of the most significant developments in the government's relations with agricultural labor ever to occur in this country. In fact, the condition and problems of agricultural laborers in the sugar industry cannot be described without referring to the labor provisions of this Act. This statute is one of only six laws ever enacted by the Congress providing for the establishment of wage rates in private industry. Four of these laws are still in effect, the Public Contracts Act of 1936, the Merchant Marine Act of 1936, the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 and the present Sugar Act. Of these, the Sugar Act is the only one which affects agricultural workers.

The Sugar Act of 1937 represents a new approach in the treatment of agricultural workers and, what is possible more significant, in the treatment of labor in an industry with tariff protection. For many years protective systems have been defended on the ground that labor shared in the benefits derived by industry from such protection. Under present sugar legislation a portion of such benefits is for the first time specifically reserved for workers.

The agricultural workers affected by this legislation are widely distributed geographically, and they work under diverse conditions of production, of labor relations, and of industrial organization, the latter ranging from large industrialized corporate structures to small farm producers. Most of the social and economic problems known to characterize agricultural labor arise within this industry: relatively low earnings, low living standards, seasonal employment, migration, limited social and educational opportunities, insecurity, instability, and inability to provide annual incomes adequate to cover reasonable needs. At the same time some sections of the industry offer more stable employment, better working and living conditions, and higher annual incomes than are afforded workers by probably any other agricultural industry. Moreover, the sugarcane industry of Puerto Rico offers the outstanding example of agricultural labor relations governed by a collective bargaining agreement.

Labor Provisions of Sugar Legislation

The Sugar Act requires that all producers of sugar beets and sugarcane who wish to qualify for conditional government payments must,

among other conditions, comply with the conditions set forth in Sections 301(a) and 301(b) which read as follows:

"(a) That no child under the age of fourteen years shall have been employed or permitted to work on the farm, whether for gain to such child or any other person, in the production, cultivation, or harvesting of a crop of sugar beets or sugarcane with respect to which application for payment is made, except a member of the immediate family of a person who was the legal owner of not less than 40 per centum of the crop at the time such work was performed; and that no child between the ages of fourteen and sixteen years shall have been employed or permitted to do such work, whether for gain to such child or any other person, for a longer period than eight hours in any one day, except a member of the immediate family of a person who was the legal owner of not less than 40 per centum of the crop at the time such work was performed.

"(b) That all persons employed on the farm in the production, cultivation, or harvesting of sugar beets or sugarcane with respect to which an application for payment is made shall have been paid in full for all such work, and shall have been paid wages therefor at rates not less than those that may be determined by the Secretary to be fair and reasonable after investigation and due notice and opportunity for public hearing; and in making such determinations the Secretary shall take into consideration the standards therefor formerly established by him under the Agricultural Adjustment Act, as amended, and the differences in conditions among various producing areas: ..."

Wages must be paid in full before the producer is entitled to receive a conditional payment. Thus not only are fair and reasonable wage levels assured but the abuses of non-payment or incomplete payment of wages are eliminated.

Somewhat similar labor provisions were embodied in the Jones-Costigan Act of 1934. In 1933, during the discussion of the N.R.A. code for the sugar beet industry attention was directed to the condition of agricultural labor in that industry. The National Recovery Administration could take no action in this field but at the suggestion of the Administrator, the President appointed a committee to study the situation. This committee made an investigation and largely, as a result of its recommendations, the Jones-Costigan Act of 1934, which made sugar a basic commodity under the Agricultural Adjustment Act, contained certain child labor and minimum wage provisions. These provisions, which were embodied in the sugar beet production adjustment contracts entered into by farmers and the Secretary of Agriculture, limited the employment of children and provided that the Secretary might establish minimum wages upon the request of the interested parties. Only one wage determination was issued under this Act before the crop adjustment-processing tax-benefit payment provisions of the Agricultural Adjustment Act, to which the Jones-Costigan Act was an amendment, were declared unconstitutional in January 1936. This single wage determination was

limited to parts of Colorado, Montana, Nebraska, and Wyoming.

The effect of this Supreme Court decision upon labor is indicated by the following statement of the Secretary of Agriculture:

"The invalidation of the former production adjustment payments to producers also destroyed the only practicable means that had been found to assure labor an equitable share in the income from sugar beet and sugarcane production. Consequently, both growers and laborers are now denied assurances of an equitable and reasonable share in the income of the domestic industry under a program of which they, as well as the processors, were intended to be the beneficiaries."

In a message of March 1, 1937 to Congress recommending new sugar legislation, the President urged the inclusion of labor provisions in the following words:

"It is also highly desirable to continue the policy, which was inherent in the Jones-Costigan Act, of effectuating the principle that an industry which desires the protection afforded by a quota system, or a tariff, should be expected to guarantee that it will be a good employer. I recommend, therefore, that the prevention of child labor, and the payment of wages of not less than minimum standards, be included among the conditions for receiving a Federal payment."

The inclusion of labor provisions in the new legislation was supported by the President, the Secretary of Agriculture, and by the industry.

The new legislation differed in certain respects from the Jones-Costigan Act. The establishment of minimum wages by the Secretary of Agriculture under the Jones-Costigan Act had been only at the request of interested parties. Under the Sugar Act of 1937 such action is mandatory. As a result, whereas under the 1934 legislation minimum wages were established in only parts of four states, under the present Act minimum wage rates have now been established for several years in each of the 23 sugar beet states, in Louisiana, Florida, Puerto Rico, and Hawaii. Thus far a total of 22 wage determinations have been issued. There are still to be issued two more determinations which will be applicable to operations on the 1940 crop, the last crop covered by the Sugar Act before it expires on December 31 of this year.

The present Sugar Act, unlike the Jones-Costigan Act, contains no provision for adjudicating disputes or for establishing the time and method of paying wages, except that wages must have been paid in full at the time a producer files an application for a government payment. However, Section 511 of the Sugar Act provides that:

"In order to facilitate the effectuation of the purposes of this Act, the Secretary is authorized to make surveys, investigations, including the holding of public hearings, and to make

recommendations with respect to (a) . . . (b) the terms and conditions of contracts between laborers and producers of sugar beets and sugarcane."

The wage determinations are enforced in what might be considered a semi-automatic fashion. Every producer who makes an application for a benefit payment certifies that he has paid all labor in full and at rates not less than those determined by the Secretary to be fair and reasonable. Any laborer who is not paid in full or who is paid at rates less than those established by the Secretary may file a wage claim against the producer who is then unable to receive a government payment until that claim has been settled. In the continental areas the claim is filed with the Agricultural Adjustment Administration county agricultural conservation committee of the county in which the work was performed. This committee then holds a hearing at which both the producer and laborer are ordinarily present and conducts any other investigation deemed necessary. It then renders a decision with respect to the claim. If either party is dissatisfied with this decision he may appeal to the State agricultural conservation committee which conducts a further investigation of the matter and makes a recommendation. If either of the parties is unwilling to accept this recommendation he may appeal to the Secretary of Agriculture whose decision is final.

Restrictions on Child Labor

The child labor provisions of the Sugar Act were designed to correct a situation which had long attracted unfavorable public notice. The Children's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor in its study, "Welfare of Families of Sugar-Beet Laborers," which is the outstanding published source of information on the social and economic problems of sugar beet workers has the following to say:

"Young children have long been numbered among the hand laborers of the sugar-beet fields wherever the working force has been drawn from family groups. With the pressure upon the families to earn as much as possible in a short working season and in the absence of legal standards for the protection of young children from too early and from excessive labor, too often it has been taken for granted by working parents and employing farmers alike that every member of the laborer's family, regardless of age, must do whatever he or she possibly can to assist with the field labor by which the family makes its living. Consequences in fatigue and physical strain, in loss of schooling for children, and in lack of normal home and community life have been disregarded."

Since the Children's Bureau of the Department of Labor is to testify on the general problem of children in agriculture, I shall refer only to the steps taken under the Sugar Act of 1937 to control the employment of child labor. Under this Act, as has already been noted, the employment of children under the age of 14, and the

employment of children between the ages of 14 and 16 for more than eight hours per day, is prohibited unless the child is a member of the immediate family of a person who is the legal owner of not less than 40 percent of the crop. A grower who does not observe those restrictions is not eligible to receive a conditional government payment. This child labor provision has acted as a deterrent to the employment of children in the sugar beet fields. For the first few years of the sugar legislation reliance was placed upon the observation of violations by county agricultural conservation committees themselves, or on their being reported to these committees by other persons. This has not proven entirely satisfactory and steps are being taken to provide for a periodic inspection on farms in the sugar beet areas. The Children's Bureau is cooperating with the Department of Agriculture by making age certificates available in several of the more important sugar beet producing states. It may be noted in passing that the social problem of child labor does not appear to exist in Florida, Puerto Rico, or Hawaii.

Before considering labor in the particular areas of sugar production a few remarks upon the general nature of the industry may be in order.

The Sugar Industry

The domestic sugar industry comprises what may be considered five distinct areas: Puerto Rico, Florida, Louisiana, and Hawaii which produce sugarcane; and the continental sugar beet area, made up of 23 states, with California, Colorado and Michigan accounting for almost half of the total beet sugar production.

Quite naturally, differences exist between the labor conditions and practices in the sugarcane fields and those in the sugar beet fields, but differences also exist between the widely scattered sugarcane areas and even between the various beet states. The organization of the industry, as well as the nature of the product and the geographical conditions, explains some of these variations. In Puerto Rico, for example, although there are approximately 14,000 sugarcane growers, 33 mill organizations and associated producers account for about 50 percent of the production. In Florida most of the sugarcane is produced by a single corporation. In Hawaii 38 plantations produce practically all the sugarcane. In Louisiana, on the other hand, there are about 17,600 farmers growing sugarcane for sugar and in the sugar beet area there are about 63,000 farmers.

Not only does the number of individual producing units vary but so also does the size of operations. In Puerto Rico in 1938, 90 percent of the farming units had less than 10 acres of cane each while some plantations had over 10,000 acres in sugarcane. In Florida, the United States Sugar Corporation controlled about 20,000 acres of the 24,300 acres harvested in the 1938-39 season. The average number of acres of sugarcane on the 38 Hawaiian sugar plantations for 1938 was 6,271 acres. In Louisiana in 1939, 60 percent of the farms had

less than 10 acres in sugarcane and averaged only 4 acres per farm but there were plantations with over 10,000 acres in sugarcane. There is also considerable variation in the size of sugar beet acreages. While the average acreage of sugar beets per sugar beet farm in 1939 was about 15 acres for the country as a whole, the average acreage by states ranged from 4 acres per farm in Wisconsin to 83 acres per farm in California.

These variations in the number and size of the producing units in the several areas quite naturally influence the labor conditions which I shall now describe. I propose first to describe at length the conditions and problems of agricultural workers in the sugar beet area and to follow that with briefer descriptions of laborers in the sugar industry in Puerto Rico, Florida, Hawaii, and Louisiana.

THE CONTINENTAL SUGAR BEET AREA

Sugar beets are grown in every state west of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers except Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Missouri. The importance of the sugar beet industry in these states varies a great deal. In 1939 ten states, Colorado, California, Michigan, Montana, Nebraska, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, Ohio, and Minnesota had the largest acreages accounting for 90 percent of the total.

The 63,000 beet growers, as has already been noted, differ significantly in the size of their operations. Small beet acreages characterize most of the so-called eastern unirrigated area, while relatively larger acreages are typical of the western irrigated areas, California having the largest sugar beet farms in the country. In 1939 California had 16.8 percent of the total acreage in the country but only 3.2 percent of the growers. Michigan on the other hand had only 14.6 percent of the total acreage but 26.5 percent of all the growers.

In 1939, 84 sugar beet factories owned by 23 companies processed all the sugar beets grown in this country. These companies do not themselves grow any large acreages of sugar beets but they do influence labor relations in the industry as I shall indicate in a moment.

The range in the size of growers' operations has been indicated. Climatic conditions and cultural methods also vary. The relative importance of sugar beets and other crops varies from state to state and even from county to county. This naturally affects the pattern of existing agricultural labor relations. Customs and practices and the policies of sugar companies and beet growers' associations also exhibit many differences. The description of sugar beet laborers I propose to offer must necessarily ignore most of the variant situations arising from the influence of these many factors. It is important, however, to recognize the existence of these differences in any interpretation of the following remarks.

When reference is made to labor in the sugar beet industry it is generally to what is known as contract labor. It has been estimated that

it requires 94 man-hours of labor on the farm to produce an acre of sugar beets. Sixty of these hours, or 64 percent of the total, is accounted for by contract labor. In the total cost of producing an acre of beets the cost of contract labor amounts to about 35 percent of the total. It is thus apparent that this type of labor is very important in the production of sugar beets. Other agricultural work, such as preparing the land, planting, and cultivating, is performed either by the farmer himself, or by his hired man. The economic status and the social problems of a hired man on the sugar beet farm are not different from those of the same type of labor on any farm and hence I shall confine my remarks here to the so-called contract labor.

Sugar beet contract laborers perform hand operations known as blocking and thinning, hoeing or weeding, topping and loading. The workers perform the blocking and thinning by chopping blocks of extra beet plants from the row with a short handled hoe and then by hand reducing the remaining cluster of plants to a single plant. The operation is exceedingly laborious as it requires working in a stooped position or, as some laborers prefer, on one's hands and knees. The hoeing or weeding operation is ordinarily performed with a long handled hoe and is not different from the hoeing of any other row crop. In harvesting, the beets are first loosened in the ground by the farmer or his hired man who runs a machine known as a lifter through the field. The most common practice then followed by sugar beet laborers is to pull the beets from the ground, knock them together to remove the dirt and throw them in piles or windrows. The beets are then topped by cutting off the crown of the beet with a long knife, and loaded on wagons or trucks either with a fork or by hand. Pulling and topping is ordinarily regarded as very arduous work, again because of the stooped position which the laborer has to assume and also because much of this work is performed at a season when rain and cold make working in the fields disagreeable. Sugar beet growing requires for the best results that sugar beets be left in the ground as long as possible during the growing season and in most sections the last of the crop is not harvested until there is danger of freezing weather.

It is estimated that in 1939 there were about 93,100 contract sugar beet laborers employed in the United States. Of this total the largest number was in Colorado with 20,800 beet workers; California had 16,500 and Michigan 12,300. Of these 93,100, approximately 80,600 or 87 percent were over 16 years of age and 12,500 or 13 percent were under 16. Of the adult workers, about 67,800 were male workers and 12,800 female workers. The bulk of these workers were Spanish-Americans and Mexicans. (Spanish-American is the term applied to American citizens of Spanish or Mexican extraction.) This group with about 53,000 workers accounts for 57 percent of the total labor force. The next largest single group are native Americans who, however, total only 15,000 or 16 percent of the total. The other large ethnic group which can be distinguished is the German and German-Russian which accounts for about 11,500 workers or 12 percent of the total. Other European stocks account for about 4,000 workers. There are approximately 6,000 Filipino

workers, principally in California. Other groups such as Japanese, Indian and Negro are very small. It should be noted that the above classification is not on the basis of citizenship since a large proportion of the Spanish-American group are citizens, as are also the Germans and German-Russians and other European stocks.

Sugar beet labor is organized on three principle bases: as family labor, gang labor, and solo labor. In the family labor system the members of the family work together as a unit. The family unit generally includes male and female adult workers, and frequently children. This system is more or less common in all sections of the country except California. In California the predominant type of organization is gang labor. A gang consists of a group of adult male laborers who work together either under the direction of a contractor or on a cooperative basis with their own chosen leader. While characterizing sugar beet labor in most parts of California this gang system is also found in parts of Idaho, Montana and Washington, and less frequently in other sections of the country. The third type of labor organization is the solo worker who may work by himself or in the company of one or two other laborers. This type is found mainly in Washington, Montana, Idaho, Oregon and Minnesota. A distinction can be drawn between the solo laborer and the gang laborer on the basis of the size and organization of the group involved.

No description of sugar beet labor would be complete or accurate without some reference to the use of child labor. The employment of children in the sugar beet fields has caused a great deal of criticism of the sugar beet industry, but since it is a natural concomitant of the family system of labor it has persisted through many years.

Migration of Sugar Beet Labor

Sugar beet labor is characterized not only by its racial composition and the relatively unique organization of the working unit but also by the extent to which it is a mobile labor supply migrating from one area to another. This is one of the principal characteristics of sugar beet workers. This migration is both intra-state and inter-state. Some of the beet laborers are permanently resident in the rural communities in the sugar beet growing areas. Others move out from centers of population within the beet growing area to locations within the state. It is estimated that 62,000 or two-thirds of the workers have their permanent residence within the state in which they obtain sugar beet work. Many of these, however, have to seek work in sections of the state distant from their own homes. Thirty-one thousand sugar beet laborers, one-third of the total supply, may be definitely classified as inter-state migratory labor. They move into the sugar beet growing areas at the beginning of the season and move out again when the harvest is completed. Within this group are some workers who are even more definitely migratory in their work habits since they follow the particular operations from one area to another and many even repeat the same circuit of migration within the same year. This movement of workers is generally from California into Idaho and Montana sometimes

reaching as far as western North Dakota or from California to Washington and possibly from there to Idaho and Montana. This group does not present the same problems of migratory labor as does the other larger group since it is composed of groups of adult male workers, most of whom are Filipino or Spanish-American.

The other broader stream of migration is not only numerically greater but involves the movement of whole families with the consequent derangement of family life and interference with the educational opportunities for the children. Some of this migration takes place from one sugar beet state to another. Some of it proceeds from the Spanish-American and Mexican settlements in large cities of the north, such as Denver, Colorado, Lincoln and Omaha, Nebraska, Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, but the major portion of it stems from southern states, principally Texas. Migratory labor originates in 24 different states, in six of which no beets are grown or beets are of relative unimportance. The most important of these six states is Texas, but Oklahoma, Missouri, Kentucky, Arizona and New Mexico all contribute toward the total supply.

Grower-Laborer Relations

The relations of employer and employee in the sugar beet industry are influenced by the participation in those relations of the sugar beet companies and the growers' associations. Historically, the sugar beet companies assumed complete responsibility for obtaining an adequate supply of labor and making it available to sugar beet farmers. Gradually this responsibility has been assumed more and more by individual growers and growers' associations. At the present time the situation varies from one section of the country to another, from those areas in which the sugar companies still assume complete responsibility for labor relations to those sections in which the grower takes all of the responsibility. In almost all of the areas, however, the field men of the sugar companies perform certain functions with respect to the control of labor relations. This situation will be made evident by a description of the various phases of the labor relations between the laborers and the sugar beet farmers.

It has just been noted that in the early days of the industry the companies assumed responsibility for recruiting labor. This practice still continues in many areas. The extent to which it is utilized in any particular year depends upon the acreage of beets to be planted and the availability of labor within the area. Some of the sugar companies either maintain labor agents of their own at the principal sources of labor supply or utilize the services of employment agencies. In Michigan the responsibility for recruiting laborers is assumed by the Michigan Beet Growers' Employment Committee, a part of the growers' organization. Growers' associations in other sections of the country have not generally assumed any responsibility for recruiting labor. Laborers were formerly transported into an area by train, but now transportation by trucks is a more common method. Many laborers move from one area to another by means of their own automobiles which have become an essential part of the equipment of a sugar beet laborer.

The actual employment relations of the farmer and the sugar beet laborer are in most areas governed by a labor contract. Written labor

contracts specifying the terms and conditions of employment are in common use except in the states of Utah, Idaho, Oregon and Washington. Independent of the use of these labor contracts are the practices of using a labor contractor, of hiring extra labor and employing share contractors. Labor contractors are used in California more commonly than in any other area, although they are also to be found in other sections of the country. Under the labor contractor system the grower reaches an agreement with the labor contractor with respect to the terms and conditions of performing the work and the contractor in turn recruits and employs a group of laborers. Prior to the inauguration of the wage determinations under the Sugar Act of 1937 it was a common practice for labor contractors to receive one rate of payment from the farmer and to pay the laborers upon another basis. Labor contractors generally assume other responsibilities such as the feeding and housing of the laborers and their transportation. So-called extra labor is often hired by the family or individual laborer who holds a contract to perform the sugar beet work. This extra labor may or may not be paid at the same rates as the laborer holding the contract. His employment is occasioned either by the laborer having taken more acreage than he could handle or by the necessity of obtaining some assistance for a limited period of time. Share contracts are not in common use. They involve hiring a laborer to do the hand work and sometimes other work on the crop for a certain share of the proceeds of the crop.

The labor contract constitutes the formal summarization of labor relations in those areas in which a contract is used. This contract is an individual contract and in no sense represents the results of collective bargaining. The contracts were originally formulated by the sugar beet companies. At the present time authorship and responsibility for the terms of the contracts are disputed between the sugar companies and the growers' associations.

These contracts, sometimes printed in Spanish as well as English, describe the terms and conditions of the principal employment relationships existing between the farmer and the laborer. The number of acres of sugar beets covered by the contract is specified and also the rate of payment. Since 1938 the rate of payment inserted in the contract has been that established by the Secretary of Agriculture under the provisions of the Sugar Act. The contract outlines the operations to be performed and the mutual responsibility of the laborer and the grower with respect to those operations. Most of the contracts contain provisions with respect to the cancellation of the contract in case of damage to the crop, with respect to the perquisites to be furnished by the farmer, the time payment is to be made, the arrangements for credit advances, the hiring of extra labor, and the settlement of disputes. The settlement of disputes between the laborer and farmer is the responsibility of the fieldmen of the sugar company. Some of the contracts also state which party shall provide the tools and also specify the holdback - the amount of pay to be withheld until the completion of the contract.

The time of payment is usually specified in the labor contract. Beet laborers are ordinarily paid at the completion of the particular task,

such as blocking and thinning, hoeing, and so on. Some of the contracts specify particular dates for payment which coincide roughly with the completion of the operations. In the eastern sugar beet area of Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa most of the laborers are paid by check issued to them by the sugar company. The amount of the check is charged against the account of the farmer. In California, at least until the past few years, the laborers were customarily paid through a labor contractor. In the other areas the laborer is usually paid directly by the grower.

Because the beet laborers have little or no money when they arrive in the sugar beet area to commence work and because they are ordinarily required to arrive prior to the beginning of the season's operations and are not paid until the completion of a particular operation, it is necessary for the company or the farmer to make arrangements for advancing credit to the laborers. The establishment of a line of credit at a store is more common than making cash advances. Arrangements vary from one area to another but commonly the credit arrangements and their settlement are supervised by the fieldmen of the sugar companies.

Sugar beet laborers in certain sections of the country are organized in unions of greater or less permanence and influence. These unions are now organized in the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America affiliated with the C.I.O. The reported approximate membership of sugar beet workers is 12,300. They are confined primarily to the states of Colorado, Nebraska, Wyoming, Montana, and California although there appear to be small groups of organized laborers in other states. Since growers' associations have specifically disclaimed any authority to deal with these union and relatively few growers have negotiated directly with the unions, it cannot be said that collective bargaining exists in the sugar beet area. The fact that minimum wages are established by the Secretary of Agriculture has meant that the unions have been unable to exert any direct influence on wage rates. At the same time, the unions have influenced wage rates indirectly by appearing at the public hearings held under the Sugar Act and presenting evidence and arguments in favor of the workers' request for higher wage rates. The unions have exerted some influence in the filing of wage claims and have to this extent assisted in the policing and enforcing of the Secretary's determinations of fair and reasonable wages.

Work Opportunities of Beet Labor

Since sugar beets are grown chiefly in areas which do not permit year-round cultivation, the employment opportunities are limited to the growing seasons of the year. However, these work opportunities are not spread evenly throughout the growing period but are concentrated in the peak load periods of blocking and thinning and harvesting.

Information received from sugar beet laborers indicates that their presence is required in the sugar beet area for about 6 months

of the year. The time devoted to the industry by migratory labor is even greater than 6 months. But although the laborer is required to be available in the sugar beet area for 6 months or more the actual number of days of work obtained from sugar beets does not exceed on the average about 50 days. The beet worker's income for this 6 months is determined primarily by his earnings during these 50 days.

Of 300 laborers interviewed during 1939 in the principal sugar beet states, excluding California, ten percent reported that they received no other agricultural work during the year. Ninety percent, however, did receive other agricultural work either on the sugar beet farm or on another farm, which gave them on an average about four weeks employment. The sugar beet industry and other agricultural industries furnish these workers with about 75 days of work during the year. This work constitutes the principal source of livelihood for most of these workers. Only 20 percent of the 300 laborers reported any non-agricultural work but those reporting this type of work received about 2 months employment. I shall comment later on the relationship of sugar beet laborers and their limited employment opportunities to relief programs and the relief burden.

Although the number of days' employment afforded by the sugar beet industry is limited, the days of work made available involve long hours, imposed primarily by the necessity of performing the work in the shortest time possible and in part induced by the piece rate system employed. The Children's Bureau in their study of conditions in 1935 reported that during thinning, the usual number of hours worked by heads of families in the case of over 50 percent of the laborers was 12 hours or more per day, and during harvesting, 11 hours or more per day. Over 10 percent of the laborers reported working 14 or more hours per day in thinning. More recent investigations suggest that the hours are now slightly shorter, but work in the sugar beet industry is still characterized by long hours, longer than for other types of agricultural work.

Beet Labor Wages

Wage rates in the sugar beet industry are on a piece-work and time basis, more characteristically the former. The blocking and thinning and hoeing and weeding operations are ordinarily paid for at so much per acre. The pulling and topping is paid for at so much per ton, the rate per ton varying in some areas with the yield of sugar beets per acre on the farm. Except for California, it cannot be said that hourly rates of payment are the prevailing method. Hourly rates are, however, in frequent enough use in Washington and Utah so that specific provision has been made in the wage determinations for hourly rates in those areas. There are several special devices of wage payment such as minimum guarantees, combined rates, sliding scales, and modified sliding scales which I shall not discuss.

In 1937, when it became a question of establishing wage rates for the whole sugar beet area there were in existence about 22 separate and distinct levels of wages. At the present time standardization has

been effected to the extent that in the wage determinations issued by the Secretary of Agriculture there are now eleven significantly different combinations of wage payment. These represent a recognition of long standing practices and the differences in conditions among the producing areas which the Secretary is required by law to consider in establishing wage rates. In 1939, and the same rate will prevail for 1940, the average wage payment per acre for the United States was \$21.34. This represented an increase of 6 percent over the wages existing in 1937 and a recovery of 50 percent from the low level existing in 1933.

The general trend of sugar beet wages in the United States after the pre-depression period was downward from a level of about \$23.00 per acre during the period 1927-30 to a low of about \$14.00 per acre in 1933. From that low point increases had already been made before 1937, when the determinations under the Sugar Act inaugurated a series of increases which raised the rate per acre to its present level of approximately \$21.00, a level which is still \$2.00 per acre below that of the period immediately preceding the depression.

The wage rates for 1940 for District IV, which includes Nebraska, Colorado, Southern Wyoming and South Dakota, may be cited as an example of prevailing piece rates. The rate for blocking and thinning is \$8 per acre, for the first hoeing \$2 per acre, for the second and each subsequent hoeing \$1.50 per acre. For topping, the rate is 80 cents for each ton up to and including 12 tons per acre plus 70 cents for each ton per acre above 12 tons.

Piece rates have little significance unless we know how much work a laborer is able to do in a day and consequently what his daily earnings may be. It is estimated that during the thinning season the average earnings per 10-hour day of a sugar beet worker approximates \$4.00 and during the harvesting season, \$5.00. It is thus apparent that the earnings per day worked in the sugar beet industry are high. Unfortunately this is only part of the story. It has already been pointed out that sugar beet laborers have an opportunity to work in sugar beets only about 50 days on the average during a six-month period. During much of the balance of the time they are prevented from obtaining other work either because it is necessary for them to be ready and available for work on sugar beets, or because such other work opportunities are lacking. If the total income received by the laborers for this fifty days of work were to be divided by the number of working days that they were in the sugar beet territory available for work, the average earnings per worker for the time devoted to the industry would be approximately \$1 per day.

The typical sugar beet worker's family consists of between 5 and 6 members of whom two or three work in the sugar beet fields. Many families have only a single worker and this of course seriously affects the family income. The Children's Bureau found in 1935 that one-fourth of the families had only one worker. In this connection it is appropriate to point out that the child labor restrictions in the Sugar Act have affected disadvantageously not the growers but the laborers and have tended to reduce the total earning power of the family. Those

families with children who were formerly permitted to work have probably been injured more financially by the Sugar Act than they have been benefited since the increase in wage rates has scarcely been adequate to compensate for the elimination of the assistance of children.

Annual Income of Beet Workers

The total annual income from sugar beet work of the families studied by the Children's Bureau averaged \$310 in 1934. In 1935 for a more limited area in which the 1934 income had been \$360, the 1935 income was \$340. For the country as a whole in 1935 the family income was probably less than \$300. If the 1934 income is adjusted by the increase in wage rates since that time, the probable family income in 1940 will be about \$400.

In view of the fact that the size of families and the number of workers in those families varies greatly, possibly a more suitable index of the earnings of sugar beet workers is the earnings per worker. For 1935, the Children's Bureau study reports an income per worker of \$129. A tentative estimate for 1938 for the country as a whole, for the average beet worker, is about \$190. The extent to which the income of workers varies is indicated by the fact that those tentative estimates range from as low as \$150 in southern Colorado to as high as \$250 in Ohio.

The Children's Bureau reported that an average of only \$51 per family was received from other sources, excluding relief, during 1935 by the families reporting supplementary income.

The labor contracts require the provision of certain perquisites to the laborers. Furnishing laborers with houses has been a necessary practice of long standing. To a lesser extent, garden space and wood for fuel have been furnished. The determinations of fair and reasonable wage rates contain a provision with respect to perquisites which reads substantially as follows: "The producer shall furnish to the laborer without charge the perquisites customarily furnished by him, such as, a house, garden plot, and similar incidentals." This provision of the determinations has had what might be termed a negative purpose, namely, of preventing growers from avoiding the wage requirements of the determination by charging laborers for things which were previously furnished free.

The existing situation with respect to perquisites differs from one area to another. Laborers in California receive little or nothing in the way of perquisites since any housing facilities are ordinarily furnished to the labor contractor who charges the laborer for board. In Utah, Oregon and Washington also, very little is furnished the laborers in the way of perquisites and relatively few perquisites are furnished in Idaho. A survey made during the summer of 1939 in the states of Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Minnesota, Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado, Utah, and Idaho indicated that about one-half of the total laborers received housing as a perquisite, one-third received garden space, one-fourth were furnished with a stove. The average size of the garden space made available was about one-third of an acre.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to appraise the value of these perquisites because there is such a variation in the nature of the shelter furnished and of other facilities made available to the laborers. In general it may be said that for the sugar beet area as a whole perquisites do not represent a significant addition to the annual income of sugar beet laborers.

An indication of the inadequacy of the income of the sugar beet worker is given by the proportion of sugar beet workers dependent upon public relief. The Children's Bureau found that two-thirds (63%) of all families of sugar beet laborers who were included in their study had received relief at some time during the year ending October 31, 1935, and that fully one-half of the families that had been on relief were assisted for 6 months or more during the year. A study made by the Colorado State Agricultural Experiment Station and the W.P.A. in Weld County, Colorado, one of the principal sugar beet producing counties in the country, indicated that an average of nearly 6 months of assistance had been extended to the families of sugar beet workers who had been on relief some time during the 12 months period March 1935 to February 1936. The persistent dependence of these families upon public aid is indicated by the fact that of those on relief during this period, 87 percent had also received relief some time before 1935, and 70 percent had again been aided during the 12 months period March 1936 to February 1937. The total annual income of the families studied in Weld County averaged \$436, including relief grants for the year ending March 1, 1936. About half of this income (\$222) was derived from sugar beet work. The relief agencies supplied an average of \$172 per family or two-fifths of the total income.

Standard of Living of Beet Workers

In view of the facts with respect to the income of these workers little need be said concerning the standard of living they are able to maintain. The housing of sugar beet laborers for the 6 months during which they are in the sugar beet area has long been regarded as a serious problem and some sugar companies have taken steps to provide suitable housing accommodations. It has already been noted that in a survey conducted in 1939 only one-half of the sugar beet laborers reported receiving housing as a perquisite. The 141 sugar beet laborers who had houses furnished them reported an average of 6.8 occupants per house with an average of 2.5 persons per room. The houses were frame, brick, and adobe construction, ranging from one room shacks to individual three and four room units. Fifteen of these houses had electric lights. Only seven had running water in the house and only eight had inside toilets.

The general problems of sugar beet workers are indicated by the following quotation from the report of the Children's Bureau: "The effort to earn a living in this seasonal industry exacts long hours of arduous labor from young and old. It frequently involves the children's absence from school and this contributes to their retarded educational progress and handicaps their social adjustment. Despite these sacrifices of family well-being in the performance of hand labor

necessary for the production of a beet crop, the working families are often unable to earn from their beet labor, supplemented by whatever other employment may be available to them, enough money to provide for their maintenance. During and since the depression, reduced wage rates and lessened opportunities for supplementary employment have caused many families of beet workers to resort to relief. Withal, they are inadequately fed, poorly housed, ill provided with medical care, and deprived of the means of satisfying other primary needs."

The principal problems faced by sugar beet laborers are underemployment, low incomes, and the necessity of migrating long distances in order to obtain this limited amount of work. For the country as a whole sugar beet laborers obtain work on only about 10 acres of sugar beets per worker. This is partially explained by the demand for the available work in areas where there tends to be an excess labor supply, but it is explained primarily by the requirements of the crop and the grower's natural desire that the necessary operations be performed at the most advantageous time. Growers want the thinning done as rapidly as possible so that a good stand and a good growth may be assured. At the other end of the crop cycle it is advantageous to leave the sugar beets in the ground as long as possible, which causes the harvesting to be concentrated in a relatively short period of time. To achieve these ends a large supply of labor is necessary for a short peak period. The absence of other employment opportunities in agriculture is explained by the nature of the other crops grown in the sugar beet areas and by the fact that beet workers are often considered unable to perform general agricultural work.

The low incomes of sugar beet workers are more a function of underemployment rather than the absolute level of wages paid them. It has been noted that the average earnings per day worked are relatively high but the organization of the industry and the absence of other work opportunities make it difficult, if not impossible, to attain anything approaching an American standard of living. The solution for these low incomes must be sought primarily in obtaining more employment for workers rather than by raising wage rates, for to increase the price of sugar sufficiently to effect any major improvement in the economic status of beet workers would involve exacting a disproportionate toll from the consumers in the country.

Migratory labor is not undesirable merely because it is migratory. The system of employment practiced by groups of adult male workers in California of following the crop from one state to another and utilizing all the available working time is a commendable utilization of employment opportunities. On the other hand, the evils attending the migration of whole families of sugar beet laborers are social as well as economic. The interruption of normal social life and the interference with the educational opportunities of the children are serious disadvantages. The economic costs involved in the expenditure of funds required by the physical necessity of migration and in the working time lost in actual migration are scarcely compensated for by the relatively low returns received by the migratory groups.

Certain secondary problems are those of the employment of child labor, the long hours of arduous work, and the living conditions of the sugar beet workers. Technological unemployment or displacement is not yet a serious problem for sugar beet workers. Experimentation has been carried on over a long period of years on machines designed to perform the blocking operation and also the harvesting operation, but despite the progress made there are still relatively few machines of this kind in use at the present time.

PUERTO RICO

Sugar is the most important product of the Island of Puerto Rico. It has already been pointed out that in Puerto Rico there are approximately 33 mill organizations and associated producers who account for almost 50 percent of the production; that besides these large producers there are 14,000 other growers, and that approximately 90 percent of the farming units have less than ten acres of sugarcane. Although sugarcane is found in practically all parts of the Island the geographical features of Puerto Rico and the differences in large and small scale production introduce significant variations in labor conditions.

The work performed on a sugarcane plantation or farm naturally differs from that done on sugar beets. A larger proportion of the total cost of production in Puerto Rico consists of labor cost, and the number of hours required per acre exceeds that needed by an acre of sugar beets. For Puerto Rico the cost of labor is approximately 55 percent of the total cost. The actual field operations consist primarily of planting, fertilizing, irrigating, weeding, and cultivating, and during the harvesting period, cutting and loading. The most arduous and difficult work is the cutting and loading.

It is estimated that about 115,000 laborers are employed in the sugarcane fields of Puerto Rico. This labor force is made up entirely of adult male Puerto Rican workers. No women and no children are employed in the sugarcane fields there. Although during harvesting workers travel some distance on the Island to obtain work and although the amount of labor required at harvesting is greater than at other times of the year, it cannot be said that in Puerto Rico there is any seasonal migratory labor in the usual sense.

Collective Bargaining in Puerto Rico

For the bulk of the industry labor relations are governed by collective agreements entered into by the Free Federation of Laborers of Puerto Rico and the Association of Sugar Producers of Puerto Rico. The practice of collective bargaining has existed for eight years. Collective agreements are negotiated annually. These agreements cover the basic features of labor relations between the parties. The one in existence at the present time specifies that the basic day shall consist of 8 hours (7 hours for those who work in water) and that for work over 8 hours the overtime rate is to be double the

regular rate. The agreement specifies that the work is to begin at 7:00 a.m. and continue to 11:00 a.m. and recommence at noon continuing until 4:00 p.m. Contract work or piece rate work are forbidden by the agreement. Wages are to be paid weekly in cash and a procedure for adjusting any differences between the workers and the employers is specified. The agreement also contains the following clause: "Employers shall not interfere in any shape or form with the organization and operation of workers' unions and no pressure of any kind shall be brought to bear upon any worker who may have acted as a leader in the presentation of claims or complaints in defense of or for the benefit of himself or his co-workers. If any worker is dismissed for any such cause he shall immediately be reinstated after a prompt investigation."

The agreement also specifies the rate of wages to be paid for the several operations. For the past three years the rates of wages adopted by the parties as a result of collective bargaining have been in the main accepted by the Secretary of Agriculture as the fair and reasonable wage rates to be established in the wage determinations.

The workers in the sugarcane fields are organized in their own unions. There are about 175 local agricultural unions, all affiliated with the Free Federation of Labor which in turn is affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. No estimate of the total membership is available.

There is no problem of recruiting labor in Puerto Rico as there is a surplus available. The problem is rather one of spreading work and the union has adopted the policy of dividing the work equally among the laborers available and in this policy, despite its obvious disadvantages, most of the large growers have cooperated.

The harvest period is the time of greatest employment but there are no satisfactory data on the amount of employment received at this time or during the whole year. Studies have shown that the number of hours actually worked per week is only about 50 percent of full time. For example, in the 1938-39 season, workers averaged only about 24 hours work per week. It is estimated that on an annual basis workers are employed less than one-half of the available time and that a sugarcane worker receives about 140 days of work in sugarcane. Although, as has already been noted, a basic eight-hour day is specified in the agreement, the number of hours actually worked per day is less than this.

Wages of Puerto Rican Sugar Workers

Wage rates adopted in the collective agreement are on a daily or hourly basis. Since the wage rates specified in the agreement have, with minor exceptions, been adopted by the Secretary in issuing wage determinations, the wage determinations have not in themselves increased wage rates in Puerto Rico for that part of the industry covered by the collective agreement. The determinations have had the effect, however, of extending to the growers not covered by the agreement the wage rates

specified therein. Since the organizations of the colonos or independent growers have refused to enter into an agreement with the union, they would not, in the absence of the Secretary's wage determination, be compelled to maintain the union wage rates.

The actual wage rates established vary from a minimum of \$1.00 per eight-hour day for certain types of operations to \$1.70 per day for tractor drivers. The minimum rate has increased 17 percent since the inauguration of the Sugar Act.

Satisfactory information is not available on the earnings of the sugarcane workers. However, estimated earnings per week are approximately \$3.70 and annual earnings not more than \$160. These earnings are low, not so much because of wage rates but because of the limited employment opportunities and the policy of dividing the available work. Some of the larger companies and the larger independent growers furnish perquisites in the form of houses and garden space, but it may be stated that perquisites are a less common and valuable consideration in Puerto Rico than in some of the other cane-producing areas.

The social and economic position of sugarcane laborers in Puerto Rico cannot be deemed satisfactory. The problem, however, is not so much a question of the organization of the sugar industry or of the wage rates paid. The fundamental problem is one of a lack of balance between the number of people seeking subsistence and the natural resources of the Island. Although the circumstances of the sugarcane worker in Puerto Rico are probably less favorable on the whole than in some of the other sugar-producing areas of the United States, it should be noted that the Puerto Rican sugarcane workers possess a greater measure of control over the terms and conditions of their work than those in any other area. For this the labor union and the willingness of the large producers to accept collective bargaining are in large measure responsible.

FLORIDA

Florida harvested 24,300 acres of sugarcane during the 1938-39 season. This sugarcane production is concentrated in two localities and is almost entirely under the control of two organizations; one a corporation and the other a cooperative association. Since the bulk of the sugarcane grown in Florida is grown by the United States Sugar Corporation, the following remarks apply particularly to the labor conditions on its plantations, although conditions and practices are substantially the same in the smaller area in which the Fellsmere Sugar Producers' Association functions. The operations performed in Florida are basically the same as in Puerto Rico except that the closely integrated and highly mechanized methods of production in the southern state result in a lower labor cost per ton of cane produced.

During the 1938-39 season approximately 1,650 field laborers were given employment throughout the year by the U. S. Sugar Corporation and an additional 1,875 field workers in the harvesting season. This labor force is composed almost entirely of adult male negro

workers. No children are employed. Half of the laborers live on the plantations the year round. The other half come in for the harvesting season from Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and South Carolina. It is estimated that 400 of these laborers come from Georgia, 200 from Alabama, 100 from Mississippi, 300 from South Carolina and the balance from Northern Florida. Many of these workers are cotton share-croppers and laborers who go to Florida after they have finished the cotton harvest.

The Fellsmere Sugar Producers Association gave a total of 17,486 man-days of employment in the calendar year 1938 and it ordinarily employs approximately 250 cane cutters during harvest. The total man-days of employment for the U. S. Sugar Corporation for the 1938-39 crop was 678,287 and about 3,500 workers were employed during the harvesting season.

Labor relations in the industry are on the basis of individual bargaining with a paternalistic corporation. Labor is not recruited from other areas in the same fashion as in the sugar beet area but the corporation takes steps to assure itself an adequate labor supply. Many laborers return year after year for the harvesting season. The workers are not organized in any union.

Sugarcane in Florida is generally planted from October to April and harvested during practically the same period. Workers receive an average of 115 days employment during the growing season, and 139 days in the harvesting season. A laborer who worked during both seasons would receive approximately 254 days of employment during the year. However, only resident laborers, who constitute about 45 percent of the total labor force, could receive this much employment. The basic working day is one of 9 hours. Wages are paid in cash monthly.

Earnings of Florida Sugar Workers

During the harvesting season all work is paid for on a piece work basis. The average earnings per day of all workers employed in cutting and loading cane in the 1938-39 crop was \$2.13 per day. In 1938 it was \$2.23, and in 1937, \$2.08. All other work during the balance of the year is paid for on a daily or hourly basis. The rate for adult males established by the Secretary of Agriculture for this other work has been \$1.60 per day. This compares with the rate of \$1.50 per day existing in 1937 and represents an increase of 7 percent. Harvesting piece rates have been increased roughly in proportion. The determination also provides a minimum day rate for harvesting of \$2.00 per 9-hour day.

It is estimated that the average earnings of a fully employed sugarcane worker in Florida would be approximately \$480. A worker employed during the entire harvesting season only would earn almost \$300. In addition, resident laborers receive valuable perquisites in the form of rent-free houses, fuel, garden plots, medical care, and recreational facilities. The estimated rental value of the houses is \$15.00 per month. Commissaries are also run by the corporation at which

supplies may be obtained at prices at least as cheap as at outside stores. Meals are furnished to temporary workers on the plantations at 15 cents per meal.

The standard of living of the sugarcane workers employed by the United States Sugar Corporation is higher than that of most other agricultural workers in the continental area. The seasonal migration of cane labor to Florida does not appear to present any problems except possibly that of controlling the supply so that the maximum amount of employment is available for the year-round workers and for those who are employed only during harvesting. The company should be able to regulate the supply of labor to achieve this end. On the whole, sugarcane workers in Florida constitute a relatively privileged class of agricultural workers.

HAWAII

The sugar industry in Hawaii, like that in Florida, is highly centralized. It is composed of 38 plantation companies. These plantations are located on four different islands and operate under different geographical and labor conditions. Labor relations are rather uniform in view of the organization of 36 of the plantations in the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association which recommends general standards for all of its members.

The work performed by laborers in Hawaii is in general similar to that of laborers in the other cane areas. Approximately 50 percent of the total cost of producing sugarcane is labor cost. In 1939 there were approximately 30,000 field hands employed on the sugar plantations. Approximately 80 percent of these were male, 11 percent female, and 9 percent non-adults. Among the field hands are some laborers classed as long-term contractors who perform certain cultivating and irrigating operations for a minimum guaranteed wage plus an increase based on the production in the fields covered by the contract. There are in addition about 3,500 planters who range in effective status from laborers to independent operators. Child labor is not a problem in Hawaii.

The original source of labor for the sugarcane plantations is indicated roughly by the following analysis of laborers on the basis of race. Approximately 50 percent are Filipinos and 32 percent Japanese. The balance of the labor population is made up of small numbers of Puerto Ricans, Chinese, Koreans, Portuguese, native Hawaiians, and Anglo Saxons. Native Hawaiians account for about 3 percent of the total, and Anglo Saxons for about the same number. These laborers are, of course, largely citizens. Although there is a migration of labor from one island to another, and in the past there has been migration to and from the Philippine Islands, the type of migratory labor existing in Hawaii does not correspond with the type found in the mainland United States.

The Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association recommends to its members certain standards for labor relations which are entirely on the

basis of individual bargaining. In the Hawaiian industry the problem of recruiting labor is not the perennial one of obtaining a seasonal supply but rather the problem of assuring a constant and adequate supply of labor in the territory. This problem does not appear at the present time to be as pressing as it has been in the past.

Wages are paid in cash monthly, except for the long-term contractors who receive advances but whose final returns are not ascertained until the crop is harvested.

Only one labor organization of agricultural workers, with membership on four plantations, exists in the territory, a local union of the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America, affiliated with the C.I.O. No unions or organizations of employees have, however, been recognized by the plantation managements for purposes of collective bargaining.

Sugarcane is both planted and harvested in every month of the year in Hawaii so that the industry affords laborers practically year-round employment. The average number of days worked by sugarcane field workers in 1937 was 254 days. An 8-hour day is considered the basic working day.

Wages of Hawaiian Sugar Labor

Much of the work is performed on what is known as a short term contract basis which is synonymous with piece work. Many of the plantations have an elaborate and flexible piece work system. Other laborers are paid on a day or hourly basis. A third group already referred to, the long term contractors, receive an advance of \$1.50 for each day they work and when the crop is harvested receive an additional amount based on the tonnage produced. The average earnings per day of male workers in Hawaii in 1939 was \$2.23. For harvesting work daily earnings averaged \$2.50 and for non-harvesting work, \$1.91. Estimated annual earnings for Hawaii for adult male workers range from \$500 to \$600, in addition to perquisites. It should be noted in connection with wage rates and earnings that the Sugar Act has not been the main determining factor in the increase of earnings since on many plantations the earnings exceed the minima specified by the Secretary of Agriculture. The wage determinations, however, did raise the minimum rate per day from \$1.00 to \$1.40 and brought certain mill areas, where earnings were below the average for the territory, up to such a rate.

Perquisites constitute an important part of the income of Hawaiian sugarcane workers. These perquisites are on the whole more complete and valuable than those furnished in any other sugarcane growing area. They include housing, fuel, water, garden space, medical attention, and recreational facilities. In fact the plantations have been allowed by the Wage and Hour Administration to value these perquisites as the equivalent of 6 cents per hour or 48 cents per day.

As a result of relatively high earnings, year-round employment opportunities and valuable perquisites, the standard of living maintained by most Hawaiian sugarcane workers is superior to that maintained in any other sugarcane area of the United States, with the possible exception of resident laborers in Florida.

LOUISIANA

In the 1938-39 season 270,000 acres of sugarcane were harvested by 17,617 sugarcane growers in Louisiana. The industry is not as highly integrated as in some of the other sugarcane areas for of the total number of sugarcane farms in 1939 sixty percent had less than 10 acres of sugarcane, while some plantations had over 10,000 acres in sugarcane.

The nature of the operations performed by Louisiana sugarcane workers is the same as in the other cane areas. It is estimated that there are about 85,000 of these workers, eighty percent of whom are negroes and the remainder white. Most of the workers are adult males but it is estimated that 15 percent of the total number employed are women. Some children - about 3 percent of the total labor force - are employed in the cane fields. Sugarcane labor can be divided into two main categories: resident labor which lives on the plantations the year round, and non-resident labor which performs work during the rush season. The non-resident labor may come from nearby villages or it may come from adjacent states. Obviously, the smaller farms do not have resident laborers but depend upon those available in the community. During the harvesting season, which creates the greatest demand for labor, workers migrate into the sugarcane area from the cotton sections of northern Louisiana and from the adjacent States of Texas and Mississippi.

Labor relations are on the basis of individual bargaining qualified in the case of the resident laborers on some of the larger plantations by a paternalistic interest in the workers, many of whom have resided on the plantations for a long period of time. Although labor is recruited from other areas for the harvesting season this recruitment is not as highly organized as in the beet industry. Individual farmers or their representatives make visits to the areas where labor is available and bring them to the farm by truck, or labor contractors may perform this same service. Many of the seasonal laborers, probably the larger part of them, come voluntarily to the farms or general areas where they have previously received employment. These seasonal workers are generally cotton workers who have finished the season's work in the adjacent cotton areas.

Wages are ordinarily paid in cash every two weeks. A system of advances prevails by means of which the resident laborers are supported during the period when there is little work, these advances being deducted from their earnings during periods of regular employment, especially during the harvesting season. The system of advances for sugarcane laborers does not differ essentially from the system employed in the cotton areas of the South.

There is no collective bargaining by field workers in the sugarcane industry in Louisiana. The Louisiana branch of the Farmers' Educational and Cooperative Union has local organizations which in some areas include

share croppers and small tenants who work in the cane fields during the harvesting period. The Farmers' Union has been very active in filing wage claims for its members under the provisions of the Sugar Act.

Work Opportunities of Louisiana Sugar Labor

Most of the sugarcane in Louisiana is planted in the latter part of September and harvested during October and November of the following year. From March until June employment is afforded in the hoeing and cultivation of the growing sugarcane crop. Unlike Hawaii, however, there is no opportunity for continuous employment and from June until the middle of September sugarcane laborers have little opportunity to work on sugarcane. A resident laborer receives about 240 days of employment in sugarcane and other crops during the whole year. It should be noted that sugarcane laborers in Louisiana also work on other crops which may be grown on the same plantation. Their employment opportunities are not confined to a single crop as is the case in Florida, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico, and to a large extent in the sugar beet area. There are opportunities for employment on sugarcane plantations for non-resident laborers during the cultivating season but this opportunity for employment occurs primarily during the harvesting season when such laborers receive about 65 days of work.

The number of hours worked per day varies with the season. For 1936, plantation owners reported that during the cultivation season 11 to 12 hours per day were worked on two-thirds of the plantations. During the planting season about half the plantations reported ten hours and half reported 11 hours, and during the harvesting season 9 to 10 hours was the most common length of work day. There is some reason to believe that the normal length of day has been shortened somewhat since that time, due to the fact that the wage determination for Louisiana specifies a basic day of 9 hours although without any provision for special overtime rates.

Wages of Louisiana Sugar Workers

Most of the hoeing work is done on a day basis, although piece work systems are used for this and ditching work in some sections. The rate established by the Secretary's determination for Louisiana for this type of work is \$1.20 per 9-hour day for adult males, and \$1.00 per day for adult females. Harvesting work is done both on a day basis and on a piece work basis of so much a ton cut, or cut and loaded. The determination rate for cutting by the day is \$1.50 for a 9-hour day. The rate by the ton for cutting is 75 cents, and for cutting and loading 95 cents. Under the Sugar Act of 1937 sugarcane wages have been increased in Louisiana by approximately 20 percent over the rates prevailing before the passage of the Act.

Perquisites are probably more important and more valuable in Louisiana than they are in the sugar beet area or in Puerto Rico, but they are distinctly less valuable than those furnished in Florida and Hawaii. The principal perquisites furnished are houses, garden space and wood. It has been estimated that the annual value of these

perquisites to laborers is \$45. The annual cash earnings of a resident sugarcane laborer have been estimated as approximately \$340.

The standard of living of sugarcane workers is somewhat better than that of other agricultural workers in the South. The plantation system as it still exists in certain parts of the sugarcane area affords some protection to the laborer's standard of living, but this protection does not offset the limitations of low annual earnings. The standard has unquestionably been improved by the effects on cash income of wage determinations issued under the Sugar Act.

The problems of sugarcane workers in Louisiana are not greatly different from those of other agricultural workers of the South who are characterized by low wages and low living standards. There has unquestionably been some displacement of sugarcane labor by the introduction of tractors and harvesting machines, but this problem is not more serious for sugarcane workers than for agricultural workers in general.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is my opinion that the three areas of the sugar industry in which the problem of the status and welfare of sugar workers is especially serious are Puerto Rico, Louisiana and the sugar beet area. The sugar workers in Florida and Hawaii constitute in many ways a privileged class of agricultural labor.

The problem in Puerto Rico reaches deeper than the conditions of a single group of workers. It is one of adapting the population to the inadequate natural resources. In Louisiana the problem is the general one of low incomes and consequent low standards of living, and the problems of sugarcane workers cannot be dissociated from those of other southern agricultural laborers.

The sugar beet area, on the other hand, presents certain problems which may be accorded special treatment and for which there might reasonably be some hope of solution. The limited employment opportunities in sugar beets and in other crops and the disadvantages attendant upon migration constitute situations which may in some measure be corrected. The industry itself could perhaps organize the supply and distribution of labor so as to furnish more employment per worker in sugar beets and so as to require less migration of workers.

In this connection I should like to express my views on migratory labor. The evils related to migratory labor to which our attention is so frequently directed are not necessarily inherent in the fact of migration. Such migration represents the adaptation of a mobile and variable factor of production - labor - to a relatively immobile and fixed factor of production - land, and the attendant natural resources of climate, location and fertility. To illustrate, the migration of sugar beet workers from California to Montana and of sugarcane workers from other southern states to Louisiana and Florida

represents necessary and desirable adaptation of labor to the distribution of our natural resources. Some people are prone to decry migration as such. Rather the economic necessity of migration should be accepted and attention focused on the organization and control of this necessary migration so as to avoid those economic and social disadvantages which so frequently and flagrantly accompany it. This is one of the problems to be solved in the sugar beet area.

Finally, a few words with respect to the success of the labor provisions of the Sugar Act of 1937. The Sugar Act has met with some success in improving the economic status of sugar beet and sugarcane workers by making more equitable the distribution of the proceeds of the industry, and by limiting the employment of children and hence providing more work opportunities for adult workers. In Puerto Rico the Sugar Act has made it possible to extend the benefits of collective bargaining to large bodies of labor not previously enjoying these benefits.

The Sugar Act of 1937, as it approaches its expiration with the completion of the current crop, has not solved all the problems of sugar beet and sugarcane laborers. It has, however, made some progress in improving their economic status and in securing for agricultural laborers, both through public hearings and through administrative regulations with respect to the payment of wages, the recognition that their views are entitled to consideration in the formulation of the wage bargain. At the same time the responsibility of the farmer for the welfare of his laborers has been brought to the attention of farmers who previously had given this responsibility no serious consideration. Possibly the labor provisions of the Sugar Act are most significant and offer the greatest promise to agricultural labor in general, in their explicit recognition that agricultural laborers are entitled to share in the benefits provided by our national farm programs and by the protective tariff and subsidy measures adopted by the Federal Government.